

# School Breakfast Promotion Through Signage Pilot Project

## Final Report

2010 – 2012



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Purpose and History of Project .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Timeline .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Participation.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Lessons Learned .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Looking ahead .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Expectations and Timeline .....	9
Memorandum of Understanding .....	11
Proof from Sign Company for Signage .....	13
Photos of Signs and Banners from Participating Schools.....	14



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# School Breakfast Program Promotion Through Signage Pilot Project

This document provides an overview and evaluation of the *School Breakfast Program Promotion Through Signage Pilot Project*. This pilot project was organized by Montana Team Nutrition and the Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs. This Final Report was prepared by the Office of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau, Superintendent.

## Acknowledgements

Montana Team Nutrition Program would like to thank the four schools for participating in this pilot. The support of the school administrators and food service managers was especially appreciated. We would like to specifically thank the following people for their time and efforts in carrying out this project: Dr. Kimberly DeBruycker, Mr. Dale Ahrens, Mr. Scott Reiter, Ms. Colleen Job, Ms. Cindy Geise, Mr. Matt Lewis, Ms. Michelle Meredith, Ms. Jennifer Spellman, and Ms. Charlotte Specht.

## For More Information

### Montana Team Nutrition Program

Montana State University  
202 Romney Gym, PO Box 173370  
Bozeman, MT 59717-3370  
Phone (406) 994-5641

Katie Bark, RD, LN, SNS  
[kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov)

### Montana Office of Public Instruction

School Nutrition Programs  
PO Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501  
Phone (406) 444-2501

Christine Emerson, MS, RD State Director  
[cemerson@mt.gov](mailto:cemerson@mt.gov)

## This report is available online at:

[http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School\\_Nutrition/Breakfast.html](http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/Breakfast.html)

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**Developed by Montana Team Nutrition Program**

## Introduction

The Montana Team Nutrition Program is the training arm for school nutrition programs and builds support for healthier school environments through food service training, nutrition education and implementation of the school wellness policy.

Impacting School Breakfast Program participation is a critical step in helping to end childhood hunger in Montana. Studies have confirmed that children that eat breakfast each day also are more apt to perform better on academic tests as well as behave better. Through this pilot project, four Montana schools had the opportunity to test a marketing strategy for use in school breakfast programs to increase community awareness and student participation through the usage of signage.

This pilot was successful in collecting vital information on this marketing strategy as a possible outreach method for schools to utilize in promoting their breakfast program to students, parents and the community.

This report provides the history, timeline, lessons learned, and other insight into the *Breakfast Program Promotion Through Signage* pilot project offered during the school year of 2011-12.

## Purpose and History of Project

In Montana, the majority of schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program also participate in the National School Breakfast Program. However, the average participation rates in the school breakfast programs are low. For instance, in many traditional style breakfast programs, participation rates can typically be 18% of eligible students, often ranging from 15 to 20% of the children. The good news is that in schools with high rates of children receiving free and reduced priced benefits, average participation rates range from 30% to 90% depending on the service style offered. Schools that offer an expanded breakfast service style, such as breakfast in the classroom or a grab and go breakfast or breakfast after first period have significantly higher participation levels.

The project was directed towards testing a marketing strategy in four Montana schools of using signage to promote a school breakfast program with the intended outcome of increasing participation levels. Four elementary schools were selected to participate in the pilot project through expressed interest from either the school administrator or food service manager or director. This pilot project was conducted from fall 2011 to June 2012 and directed by Katie Bark.

## Timeline

**Spring 2011** – Montana Team Nutrition initiated the planning process and created the project timeline. Marketing efforts of this pilot project were developed and schools were solicited to participate.

**September 2011** – Montana Team Nutrition staff developed two documents to outline the pilot project. They were: The Pilot Project Expectations and Timeline Document, and the Memorandum of Understanding to share with interested schools. These documents are available in the Appendix Section of this report.

**August 2011 – September 2011** – Marketing the pilot project to solicit schools to participate in it.

**November 2011** – Started working with the pilot schools on developing their timeline, banners or signs and obtaining a signed copy of the Memorandum of Understanding. Gallatin Gateway School from the Gallatin county in southwestern Montana was the first school to participate.

**December 2011** – West School from Laurel and Garfield School from Lewistown confirmed their participation in the pilot project. A Memorandum of Understanding document was completed and signage was created and hung up in each school.

**March 2012** – Confirmed the final school for participation in the pilot project which was West Elementary from Great Falls School District. With the late entry, they agreed to keep the banners up through June 2012 and then put them up again in the beginning of 2012-13 school year.

**April 2012** – Completed the distribution of the four \$500.00 mini-grants to each of the pilot schools. The Project Director ensured that the schools followed the USDA regulations as outlined in the *Attachment D – Guidelines for Expending Team Nutrition Mini-Grant Funds*.

**September - December 2012** – Collected final reports from schools, analyzed the data, and interviewed school staff to assess the success of the project and developed the final report for pilot project.

## Participation

Four elementary schools participated in this pilot project. Each one of them agreed to meet the timeline and expectations of the pilot project. Project expectations and the timeline are included in the Appendix of this report. Each school agreed to post a banner(s), signs on entry doors to the school or utilize a window slick on a school bus as a strategy to promote awareness of their school breakfast program. The school staff, either the administrator/principal or food service manager/director helped to make decisions concerning the type of signage and the design/wording for each sign/banner. The placements of the signs were designed for outside of the school so they could be viewed by parents, students and the general community. The target

audiences for the signs/banners were directed to the parents or students. Each school worked with the Montana Team Nutrition Program to create the signage used at their school. The Montana Team Nutrition School paid for the signage and gave a \$500.00 mini-grant to each participating school. The mini-grant could be used to support training or technical assistance for the school nutrition program staff or to be utilized in the future for school meal promotional or nutrition education materials.

The signage included key information on the value of school breakfast and the time period that the school breakfast program operated. Samples of each of the banners, signs, or school bus window slicks created are in the Appendix of this report. Each of the signs was also linked to the school mascot to link the breakfast message to the school. For example, the banners created for West School of Great Falls School District, stated *Paws for Success: We Think Food As Kids Can't Think Without It.* The school's mascot is a wildcat and their school logo is a paw which was included on the banners. An example of a message directed to the students was from Gallatin Gateway School on the school bus window slick that was created. It said, *"Have You Have Breakfast Yet? We proudly serve breakfast each day from 8:00 to 8:30 a.m."*

#### **Signage Cost Information:**

The banner's dimensions were 48" X 96" feet and had grommets so they could be easily hung. The school bus slick dimensions were 10" X 30". The entry door signs were 14" X 17". The banners/slicks/signs were done in four colors. The cost of the each banner was \$194.00, a school bus slick was \$27.00, and an entry door sign was \$19.00. See the Appendix for photos of them.

Pilot school information is summarized in the table below:

<b>Participating School</b>	<b>Signage Types</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Gallatin Gateway Elementary Grades K-8	2 Banners (outside) 1 window slick for school bus	Gallatin Gateway	10 - 2011 to 09 - 2012
West School, Laurel School District, Grades PK-2	1 Banner (outside) 2 signs for 2 entry doors	Laurel	11 - 2011 to 06 - 2012
Garfield School, Lewistown School District, Grades PK-4	2 Banners (outside)	Lewistown	11 - 2011 to 06 - 2012
West School, Great Falls School District, Grades PK-6	2 Banners (1 outside, 1 inside)	Great Falls	3 - 2012 to 09 - 2012

## Results

### **Did the Signage Increase Awareness of School Breakfast Program?**

All of the four schools participating in this project felt that the signage was helpful in increasing awareness of the breakfast program. Some of the comments are observations from the school staff included:

- Garfield School, Lewistown: The banner posted in the front of the school faced the street where parents drop off their children and this caused some attention to the process. We had community members that drove by the schools and saw the banners ask questions about the breakfast program. Several employees also had comments from the school community about the breakfast program as a result of their increased awareness from the banners. We did note that we gained some regular student participation in the program and even some teachers started buying a school breakfast. The banners were used as a tool by playground staff and teachers to remind students that breakfast should be eaten before class and playtime in the morning.
- West Elementary, Great Falls School District: I think it served as a reminder for students to stop and eat rather than go straight out to play. When they were first posted, parents and students were observed stopping and reading the signs. Parents commented that they looked nice and were a good reminder. A new staff member appreciated knowing about the breakfast program for her own grandchildren! Students still walk by and notice the signs. I am hoping that they serve as a reminder to go and eat breakfast rather than go out to play. We feel we have increased our breakfast participation slightly as a result of the signage helping to promote the program.
- West School, Laurel School District: The food service director felt that the signage did increase the numbers somewhat; the signs may have made the parents more aware of the program. However, at this school, the outside banner wasn't hung for the entire timeline due to the inability of hanging it without covering up the school sign. The response was positive or indifferent, however there were a few parents that did not like the idea that the school was advertising the breakfast program for some reason.
- Gallatin Gateway School: The outside banner brought awareness to the food service breakfast program. Parents inquired at the school office about the program and questions were asked about the cost of the program, applications, and menu items.

### **Did the Signage Increase Participation in School Breakfast Programs?**

During the project timeline, daily participation levels in three of the four schools did not increase. The increase in the one school (Garfield School, Lewistown School District) was quite substantial – a gradual increase of six additional meals (a 15% increase) each day. The signage used at this school was two outside banners hung at the front and back entrances of the schools targeting students, parents, and the general community. Participation levels at the three other schools either stayed the same or had a slight decrease over the project timeline.

However, even in the one school that an increase in participation levels was seen, we feel we can't contribute this solely on the use of the signage. This is true since participation levels are affected by several factors including the school menu, seasonal weather and school and bus schedules. While we can't attribute increases in the participation levels at the pilot schools, we feel that there is potential for increases in participation through continued sign usage in combination with other marketing strategies. The use of the signage can be a contributing factor to helping improve participation levels in school breakfast programs and the variety of different types of signage available can be developed to reach students, parents or the general community. For example, Gallatin Gateway School is interested in continuing to use the banner that is hung on the outside entrance to the school but will be using the school web site, cafeteria walls, parent flyers and fact sheets to reach parents and student about the importance of eating breakfast each day and their breakfast program in helping children be ready to learn each morning. They even suggest developing bumper stickers that parents could use on their cars stating "My child eats a healthy breakfast each day" which could encourage more children to eat breakfast each day and to promote their school breakfast program.

### **Did the signs hold up during the timeline?**

Most of the signage did hold up during the project timeline. The only exception to this statement was at Garfield School in Lewistown School District; one of the two outside banners didn't hold up due to wind damage. This banner was hung using only the top two grommets, instead of all four grommets (on each corner of the banner), which allowed the banner to move and hit the brick wall each time a strong wind came up. Over the course of the project timeline, the banner ripped at the corners. It is still being used but if a new banner was to replace it, the banner needs to be hung using all of the four grommets to prevent wind damage.

The outside banner created for West Elementary in Laurel School was hung in the front of the school but in a place that covered the school's name sign. Rather than drill new holes in to the brick, they used some existing banner mounts which in turn partially covered the school name sign. This placement did not go over well with parents and some parents complained that the school sign was being overshadowed by the banner. Therefore, the principal took down the banner during the timeline of the project. The school maintenance manager and principal didn't pursue another location for the banner during the pilot project. Therefore, the school only used the two small signs hung on the entry way doors during the rest of the project.

One interesting fact that we learned about the use of window slicks in school buses is that they can only be made clear, without color in them. We learned this fact from Gallatin Gateway School in which a green colored window slick for the school bus was made to encourage students to enjoy a nutritious breakfast at the school breakfast program. Apparently in December 2011, the bus driver reported being asked about the window slick by a Montana Highway patrolman. The patrolman told the bus driver that they don't want signage in buses unless it can be seen through. With a see-through cling, they are assured that the window cling or signage will not obstruct the view of the bus driver.



Comments from the participating schools included:

- The banners are very durable and are still hanging on the outside of the school building.
- The window cling for the school bus is durable but needs to be changed to be see-through and without color. We believe putting the window slicks on the bus is an advantage and a constant reminder to parents and schools to eat breakfast before school. We would like to continue their use.
- The banners held up if they were secured and fastened securely using all four grommets.
- We have the banners tied down securely so that way it helps with the high winds we experience often. We have them out for this school year, and they are holding up just great so the students can be reminded to eat breakfast each day this year too.
- The small entry door signs are being used and have held up nicely. They are hung using small suction cups on the glass doors.

### **Are the schools continuing the use of the signage in the 2012-13 school year?**

Yes all of the four schools are using all or part of the signage provided in this project during the 2012-13 school year. Gallatin Gateway School isn't able to use the window slick developed, however they are interested in having a clear one made for their school bus to continue this marketing technique. West Elementary School in Laurel is hanging the banner inside their school (in the entry hall or cafeteria) so it can be used to market their school breakfast program.

One of the school districts, Lewistown School District, liked this idea so much that they used the mini-grant funds they received to participate in the pilot project to purchase two similar banners for another one of their elementary schools, Highland School (grades K-2). In briefly talking with some of the Highland school staff, they feel that the addition of the outside banners have helped to increase awareness of the school breakfast program. The school secretary told us that since she was new to the community, it helped educate her on the program too.

## **Lessons Learned**

This pilot project taught us some valuable lessons about using signage to promote a school's breakfast program. This project was worthwhile in many ways and demonstrated that the use of signage is a cost effective strategy to increasing awareness and has the potential to influence participation levels when combined with other marketing techniques. Lessons learned include:

- Signage should be used to increase awareness by students and parents of school breakfast programs. Colorful signs are bright, cheerful and provide useful information on the school breakfast program. Use this technique in combination with other

marketing strategies to fully realize the impact on increasing awareness and program participation.

- The cost of banners, entry way door signs and window slicks are very affordable especially considering their durability if hung securely.
- Window slicks made for a school bus need to be clear and not contain color so they aren't a hindrance to the school bus driver's view.
- When hanging outside banners, be sure to secure them well using the four grommets on each corner so they can withstand strong winds better.
- When hanging banners or any signage, ensure the placement doesn't obstruct the view of the school name signs.
- If this pilot project is repeated, include a stronger component on obtaining feedback from school staff, students, and parents to fully assess the impact of the signage. For example, a simple short questionnaire or focus group could be developed or conducted to obtain feedback.

## Looking ahead

Overall, this pilot project was a great opportunity to explore the use of a variety of signage in helping to promote a school breakfast program. It allowed a chance to work with four schools in Montana to test different types of signage that can be used to encourage children to eat breakfast each day. We want to thank the four participating schools for their cooperation and willingness to share the information gained from this project.

With the federal mandate (as outlined in the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act) that school districts must provide outreach efforts to promote their school breakfast program, this project can provide an effective way to enhance marketing efforts. The Montana Team Nutrition will be promoting this strategy by posting this report on their web site ([www.opi.mt.gov/MTeamNutrition](http://www.opi.mt.gov/MTeamNutrition)) and sharing the information and lessons learned with food service program managers at upcoming training sessions or through one-on-one technical assistance.

Other ideas to enhance marketing efforts for school breakfast programs may include:

- Increasing more outside signage so more people can see them. One of the food service managers from a pilot school suggested that signage is more effective than paper brochures or handouts. Principals or parent groups should consider including an advertisement in their newsletters on a regular basis it could help reinforce the information provided on school menus to promote the habit of eating breakfast each day and the school breakfast program.
- Development and distribution of a bookmark to students on the importance of eating breakfast each day and information on the school breakfast program.

- Coordinating the use of signage with a week-long school breakfast program promotion during the beginning of the school year or during National School Breakfast Week promoted by School Nutrition Association in March of each year.

Montana Team Nutrition would like to offer information on this project to other school districts in Montana and other state agencies throughout the nation to assist with increasing the awareness and participation levels of school breakfast programs. Any of the designs for the signage, documents developed or information on the process can be shared to help others to improve the marketing efforts of school breakfast programs. Various documents used in this project are included in the following appendix. Editable versions of these documents and guidance are available by contacting Katie Bark, Project Director for Montana Team Nutrition Program at [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov) or (406) 994-5641.

## Appendix

### Project Expectations and Timeline

**September 2011**

#### Expanding Breakfast Participation Pilot Project Expectations and Timeline

**Goal:** The goal of this pilot project is to explore a signage based marketing technique to expand participation levels in four school breakfast programs. By increasing awareness of these cafeteria based breakfast programs through signage, we will be able to determine if this technique could be a best practice strategy for school outreach efforts.

**Details:** By working with four school districts from around Montana, the Montana Team Nutrition Program (MTN) staff will collect data (through monthly participation levels and a follow-up survey to school staff and parents) to learn the impact of exterior signs placed at the school entrance and/or on a window of the school bus in increasing participation levels and/or awareness of the program.

**Timeline:** September 2011 – June 2012.

#### Expectations and Timeline:

1. **Application and Selection Process:** Pilot project was marketed to school administrators and food service staff to consider participation in the program. (Spring 2011) Team Nutrition selected the school districts based on interest and geographical diversity and program type. (Summer 2011)
2. **Confirm participation:** Administrators will confirm participation in the pilot project by completing and returning the Memorandum of Understanding to the MTN Program.

(October 2011). Schools will become a USDA Team Nutrition School if not already one. Go to this web site for an online application:

[http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/TN\\_Enrollment\\_Form/enrollment.php](http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/TN_Enrollment_Form/enrollment.php)

3. **Confirm timeframe:** Administrators and MTN will confirm the timeframe for conducting the pilot project. Each school and MTN will develop the sign designs and MTN will purchase signs for each pilot school. Set timeline for posting signage with each school; estimated timeline is October through December and March through end of school. (October 2011)
4. **Provide training and technical assistance:** MTN will provide initial training and technical assistance to each school administrator and food service manager prior to their initiation of their participation in the pilot project. Training will cover clarification of the content of the goals of the pilot, available resources, record keeping and the evaluation process. On-going technical assistance will be available on an as needed basis. Schools are encouraged to consider applying for a Healthier Montana Breakfast award to ensure nutrient rich breakfasts are served.  
[http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School\\_Nutrition/HealthyMT.html](http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/HealthyMT.html)  
(Initial training - October 2011; Ongoing)
5. **Provide forms, and technical assistance:** MTN Program staff will provide the data collection forms, and will be available for ongoing technical assistance to the educators during the entire pilot project. (Ongoing)
  - **Pilot School expectations:** School administrator will be asked to stay in on-going communication with the MTN Program staff during the pilot project. (Ongoing) Pilot schools will be asked to track and document the following data during this pilot project:
    - Dates that signs were posted (as agreed upon with MTN);
    - Participation levels in school breakfast program as compared to monthly enrollment;
    - Students receiving free/reduced price meal benefits/month and participation levels of free/reduced priced students/month;
    - A list of any other marketing techniques to promote breakfast done each month;
    - Comments/observations from parents, students, staff concerning signage or breakfast program;
    - Signage use (did they hold up throughout the year ;)
    - Any other data that may be helpful to determining the success of this project; and
    - Completion of a follow up survey at the end of the project.
6. **Team Nutrition provided summary:** MTN staff will provide a summary of the pilot project to the participating schools upon completion of the project. (September 2012).
7. **Honorarium for participating schools:** Participating school districts will receive up to a \$500.00 mini-grant for their participation in the pilot project. This mini-grant will be

dispersed in January 2012 and the funds must be spent by August 31, 2012. These funds can support marketing and promotion of the school nutrition programs, training of school nutrition staff or educators concerning food service, nutrition education and physical activity, nutrition education efforts, including garden based learning, as long as the funds are expended according to Attachment C - *USDA Guidelines for Allowable Team Nutrition Mini-Grant Expenditures*.

**Sponsorship:** This project is sponsored and funded by a 2010 USDA Team Nutrition Training Grant awarded to the Montana Office of Public Instruction. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Project Coordinator:** Katie Bark, RD, LN, Katie can be reached at (406) 994-5641 or by e-mail at [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov) The web site for Montana Team Nutrition Program is: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/MTeamNutrition.html>

## Memorandum of Understanding

### **Memorandum of Understanding Between Gallatin Gateway School District and Montana Team Nutrition Program Regarding Expanding School Breakfast Participation Through Signage Pilot Project.**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to confirm participation in the pilot project conducted by Montana Team Nutrition Program to test the use of signage in helping to expand breakfast program participation in an elementary school.

Gallatin Gateway District will be one of four schools participating in the pilot project and will agree to conduct the following activities during the 2011-12 school year.

1. Hang the signs at the designated places during the specified times. The places are: banners will be hung at the main entrance and at the back of the school. The specified times will be October - Winter break; and then again at March 1<sup>st</sup> through end of school.
2. Record the following data:
  - Participation levels in the school breakfast program for each month at the participating school.
  - Number of students receiving free/reduced price meal benefits per month and the participation levels (%) of free/reduced priced students per month.
  - A list of any other marketing technique(s) to promote breakfast and the month the technique(s) was done.
  - Comments/observations from parents, students and staff concerning signage or breakfast program.
  - Signage use (did the signs hold up?) –comments or observations for long term use.

- Any other data that may be helpful to determining if the signs had any impact on increasing participation in the school breakfast program.
  - Completion of the follow up survey at the end of the project.
3. Expend the funds of the \$500.00 mini-grant (by June 30, 2012) that the district will receive for participation in this project per the USDA regulations as outline in the Attachment D – Guidelines for Expending Team Nutrition Mini-Grant Funds.

By signing this document, I agree to this Memorandum of Understanding.

---

Superintendent

Principal

Date





## Signage Proof for One of the Participating Schools

West Elementary, Laurel School District

Copy of the proof from the sign company for the entry door signs and outside banner.

<b>INVOICE</b> – 34400 <b>NAME</b> – MSU MT Team Nutrition <b>COLORS</b> – full color <b>MATERIALS</b> – Banner <b>DESCRIPTION</b> – School Lunch - Laurel banner & sign <b>FILE NAME</b> – MSUMTTeamNutrition-SchoolBreakfastLaurel.eps	<b>SIZE</b> – 48" x 96" <b>QUANTITY</b> – 1 of each <b>SIDES</b> – single-sided <b>DESIGNER</b> – Bobb <b>PRODUCTION</b> – Hemmed edges <b>INSTRUCTIONS</b> – Grommets
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17"

14"

96"



or



  

48"

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## Photos of Banners and Signs at Participating Schools

### Gallatin Gateway School Banners and School Bus Window Slick





**West Elementary, Great Falls School District** - Banner Posted In Front of School



**Garfield School, Lewistown School District** - 2 outside Banners were purchased.  
This banner is hung at the School's Front Door Entrance







This Banner is hung at the Back and Playground Entrance of Garfield School

